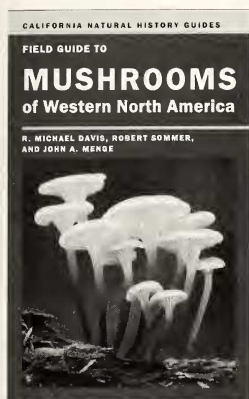


## REVIEW



*Field Guide to Mushrooms of Western North America.* By R. MICHAEL DAVIS, ROBERT SOMMER, AND JOHN A. MENGE. 2012. University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London. 459 pp. ISBN 978-0-520-27107-4, \$70.00, hardcover; ISBN 978-0-520-27108-1, \$26.95, paperback.

Western North America, and California in particular, has a rich mycoflora. This new guidebook with pictures and descriptions of more than 300 species provides a good introduction to this diversity. In general, many western species are still insufficiently known and nameless and more study is desperately needed. The present work gives as many current names as possible, and informs us that the names which are presently in use for many other species might not be the correct ones. To give an example, the well-known fly agaric mushroom with the red cap and white dots, *Amanita muscaria*, is a Eurasian species that also occurs in Alaska, but is as far as known absent from California; the local fly agaric species is North American in its distribution but has not been named yet.

The format of the book follows that of other guidebooks in this series, with an introduction (covering the topics: What is a Mushroom?; Fungal Ecology; and Collecting Mushrooms), a short chapter on classification and keys, followed by the bulk of the book—the species descriptions. At the back we find a chapter on fungal arts and crafts, a glossary, resources, and an index.

Each species is represented by a short description and a photo and is compared with other species that are or are not depicted in the book. In general there is one species per page, which

means that the photos are rather small. The quality of the photos varies from stunning to mediocre. Important characters to recognize the species are often, but not always visible, and in some cases the name does not match the photo (e.g., *Entoloma sericeum* and *Lichenomphalia umbellifera*). Very educational and illustrative is the photo of *Russula cremoricolor*, showing the red and the white fruitbodies side by side.

It is always important to know where the descriptions and the photos come from—are the descriptions based on the material that is in the photo? Are they taken from the literature (and if so what is the source), or is it a general description from the authors' experience? This issue is not covered in the introduction, but in some cases it is clear that the description and the photo do not match. This is in particular the case for the photos that were taken in Europe (e.g., *Amanita pantherina*, *Trichoglossum hirsutum*, *Ascocoryne sarcoides*, and *Phallus impudicus*). Furthermore, there is no note in the text saying that these photos were taken outside western North America. As pointed out in the book itself, European names have been and are widely misapplied to western North American species. Using European photos is not helpful and merely adds to the confusion.

The species coverage in the book is fairly comprehensive—the most commonly encountered species in northern California and the Sierra Nevada are represented, where as southern California is less well represented with only a very few desert fungi. However, it is the most up-to-date guidebook for California species available. I recommend it, with the caveats given above, for everybody who is eager to learn more about their local mushrooms. The price is right, and its small size and weight make it easy to take out into the field.

—ELSE C. VELLINGA, Department of Plant and Microbial Biology, UC Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720-3102  
ecvellinga@comcast.net.